

## Examining the interplay between body image, assertiveness and relationship satisfaction in young adults

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025, 27(01), 1409-1420

Publication history: Received on 03 June 2025; revised on 12 July 2025; accepted on 14 July 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.27.1.2637>

### Abstract

The present study intricates the complex interaction between body image, assertiveness and relationship satisfaction in young adults, a population that goes through distinct developmental challenges and social pressures. Recognizing the important role these factors play in shaping self-perception and interpersonal dynamics, this research delves into how body image affects assertiveness and relationship satisfaction, as well as the interdependence of assertiveness and relationship fulfillment. Using a sample of 235 young adults, the study employs the Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale, Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (BIAQ) and Rathaus Assertiveness Schedule to assess each construct. Analysis revealed negative correlation between body image and assertiveness, suggesting that lower body satisfaction leads to reduced assertiveness. However, no significant relationships were found between body image and relationship satisfaction or between assertiveness and relationship satisfaction. This result suggests that while body image may impact social behaviors, other factors are likely more influential in determining relationship satisfaction among young adults. The study emphasizes the need for holistic interventions promoting body positivity and assertiveness towards both personal and relational well-being.

**Keywords:** Body Image; Assertiveness; Relationship Satisfaction; Young Adults

### 1. Introduction

World Health Organization defines young adults' group as 18-29 years. According to Ministry of Statistics and Programmed Implementation Government of India, it is found that 3,71,426 people fall under the category of young adults from which 27.8% is shared by males and 26.7% is shared by females in total population (2021). Hence, this age group is considered very important as it serves as a pivotal period of transition, bridging adolescence and independent adulthood, where individuals encounter significant challenges and responsibilities that shape their future trajectories. While the fundamental processes of physiological and biological development remain unchanged, today's young adults inhabit a rapidly evolving global landscape characterized by increased connectivity, heightened risks, and economic disparities. Economic restructuring and technological advancements have amplified both opportunities and pressures, underscoring the importance of supporting young adults in navigating these complexities. Vital to workforce productivity and national well-being, ensuring the health, resilience, and success of young adults is imperative for societal advancement and global competitiveness.

In contemporary society, the psychological well-being and interpersonal dynamics of young adults have garnered significant attention. Among the multitude of factors influencing their overall satisfaction and quality of life, body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction stand out as pivotal components. Understanding the intricate connections

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among these experiences of young adults aged 18 to 25. Thus, the primary aim of this study is to explore the relationships between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction within this demographic.

The body has gained significant attention in both academic discourse and popular culture, attributed partly to consumer capitalism, medical advancements, and feminist movements. Body image, shaped by societal ideals, influences individuals' self-perception and behaviors, with women often experiencing higher rates of dissatisfaction due to societal pressures on appearance. Despite cultural shifts and feminist critiques, women still face expectations to conform to idealized body standards, leading to widespread body dissatisfaction. In India, exposure to Western media has exacerbated these issues, with studies showing comparable levels of body dissatisfaction among Indian women compared to Western counterparts, reflecting the global impact of beauty standards. In psychology, the concept of assertiveness seems to have originated in social skills training and behavior therapy in America in the late 1940s and 1950s [16]. During young adulthood, assertiveness significantly shapes an individual's future social interactions and relationships. It is the heart of interpersonal behavior and the key to human relations. Assertiveness, a crucial social aptitude, enhances personal welfare by facilitating the direct expression of feelings, desires, and thoughts in interpersonal situations. Assertiveness has also been defined as the process of direct and appropriate communication of a person's needs, wants and opinions without punishing or putting down others [2]. Relationship satisfaction was defined as "an effective response arising from one's subjective evaluation of the positive and negative dimensions associated with one's romantic relationship" [26]. Close relationships, particularly with spouses or partners, constitute a significant aspect of social life, offering support, love, and well-being, yet also presenting challenges. Relationship satisfaction stands as a central focus in romantic relationship studies, representing an individual's overall assessment of their relationship. It serves as a primary variable, widely used to evaluate relationship dynamics and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at resolving issues. Assessments of relationship satisfaction typically gauge positive or negative perceptions of the relationship along a single attitude spectrum, serving as a fundamental criterion for understanding and improving relationship quality.

### 1.1. Body Image And Assertiveness

According to McCabe, Butler and Watt, body image may be described as the perceptions, attitudes, emotions and personality reactions of the individual concerning his or her own body [28]. Ates (2016) defined assertiveness as individuals' awareness of their rights and the rights of other people and their ability to reflect this awareness to daily life [3]. It is also defined as a readiness to stand up for legitimate rights [19]. Other researchers refer to it as the ability to express one's thoughts and feelings and defend one's own right to behave in specific ways without violating the rights of others [1].

Body esteem, a multifaceted concept, encompasses the subjective evaluation of one's physical appearance, including satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's body attributes and overall attractiveness. It also incorporates perceptions of how others view one's appearance. Research indicates that body esteem significantly influences mental health and can contribute to various health issues like eating disorders and unhealthy weight management behaviors. For college students, particularly, the importance placed on appearance for employment and romantic relationships may foster competition and negatively impact interpersonal satisfaction and college experience. Cultivating positive body esteem is essential for students' academic, career, and social success, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing factors influencing body esteem in this population [4].

Research suggests a significant relationship between body image and assertiveness. The relationship between body image and assertiveness is intricate and multifaceted. Positive body image correlates with higher levels of assertiveness, enabling individuals to confidently express their sexual desires and boundaries. Conversely, negative body image often coincides with lower assertiveness, hindering individuals from advocating for their needs in intimate relationships. Understanding and addressing body image concerns are crucial for enhancing assertiveness, promoting sexual health, and empowering individuals to navigate intimate interactions confidently. Body image, the subjective perception of one's physical appearance, can significantly influence assertiveness in interpersonal interactions, particularly in the realm of relationships and sexual encounters. Individuals with negative body image may experience diminished confidence and self-esteem, which can impede their ability to assert boundaries, communicate desires, and advocate for their needs in various contexts, including intimate relationships. Conversely, those with positive body image are more likely to exhibit assertive behaviors, expressing themselves confidently and effectively in interpersonal situations. However, it's important to note that the relationship between body image and assertiveness is not deterministic and can be influenced by various factors such as cultural norms, social support, and individual personality traits. Understanding and addressing the interplay between body image and assertiveness is crucial for promoting healthy relationships and overall well-being.

### 1.2. Body Image And Relationship Satisfaction

Understanding the intricate interplay between body image and relationship satisfaction is essential for comprehending the dynamics of modern relationships. Body image, encompassing perceptions and attitudes towards one's physical appearance, significantly influences how individuals perceive themselves within intimate partnerships. Research has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between body image and relationship satisfaction, with positive body image often associated with higher levels of relationship contentment and stability. Conversely, negative body image can undermine self-esteem and contribute to relationship discord. This intricate relationship between body image and relationship satisfaction underscores the importance of exploring the psychological and emotional dimensions of intimate connections, shedding light on how perceptions of oneself impact the dynamics of romantic partnerships. For example, a study by Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) showed that women with higher body satisfaction reported greater relationship satisfaction [43]. Similarly, research by Meltzer et al. (2011) found that individuals who were more satisfied with their bodies reported higher levels of relationship quality and stability [31]. Conversely, negative body image has been associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Studies have indicated that individuals who are dissatisfied with their bodies may experience lower self-esteem and greater relationship conflict, which can undermine relationship satisfaction [8,28]. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of addressing body image concerns within the context of relationship dynamics to promote overall relationship well-being.

Also, it should be noted that body image in women encompasses a spectrum of facets, from satisfaction with specific body parts to overall concerns about body size and comfort levels in intimate settings, all of which are intricately intertwined with societal and personal perceptions. This complex interplay significantly influences sexual experiences and satisfaction. For instance, women undergoing breast cancer treatments often undergo fluctuations in body image, with many eventually reverting to pre-surgery levels regardless of whether they opt for reconstructive surgery. Medical conditions like intersex variations further complicate the nexus between body image and sexual well-being, particularly given their impact on sexual organs. Beyond medical contexts, traumatic experiences such as accidents, burns, or abuse can profoundly shape body image, potentially leading to conditions like eating disorders that, in turn, affect sexual confidence among college-aged women. Positive body image tends to correlate with more fulfilling sexual experiences, including greater comfort, higher initiation rates, and increased orgasm frequency, highlighting the crucial role of perceptions and attitudes toward one's body in shaping sexual encounters, irrespective of actual body size.

### 1.3. Assertiveness And Relationship Satisfaction

The ability to assert oneself effectively in personal relationships has been consistently linked to levels of relationship satisfaction. Assertiveness, characterized by the ability to express one's thoughts and feelings while respecting those of others, plays a crucial role in fostering open communication, mutual understanding, and intimacy within relationships. Research suggests that individuals who are more assertive tend to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction, as they are better equipped to communicate their needs, resolve conflicts, and promote closeness with their partners. Conversely, individuals who struggle with assertiveness may encounter difficulties in expressing themselves authentically, leading to misunderstandings, unmet needs, and ultimately lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Thus, assertiveness emerges as a key factor influencing the quality and fulfillment of interpersonal connections.

One study by Bélanger, Lafrenière, Vallerand, and Kuklinski (2013) investigated the association between assertiveness and relationship satisfaction among couples [7]. They found that individuals who exhibited higher levels of assertiveness reported greater relationship satisfaction. This suggests that the ability to communicate one's thoughts and feelings effectively, while also respecting the perspectives of others, contributes positively to the quality of romantic relationships. Similarly, another study by Segrin and Flora (2003) explored the role of assertiveness in predicting relationship satisfaction among dating couples [14]. They found that individuals who demonstrated higher levels of assertiveness experienced higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Moreover, assertiveness was identified as a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction even after controlling for other factors such as communication skills and conflict resolution strategies.

### 1.4. Need And Purpose of The Study

Understanding the intertwined dynamics of body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction among young adults is essential, given the prevalence of challenges in these areas and their impact on overall well-being. While existing research has delved into each variable separately or in pairs, there's a notable gap in comprehensively grasping how they collectively shape young adults' intimate partnerships. This study seeks to bridge this gap by illuminating the interconnectedness of body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction, offering insights crucial for tailored interventions and support systems.

By investigating how body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction influence each other within the context of young adults' general relationships, this study aims to gain a holistic understanding of these dynamics. This study considers various factors such as gender, cultural backgrounds, and relationship characteristics that may modulate these relationships, providing a nuanced perspective on their complexities.

The study endeavors to uncover the intricate mechanisms through which these variables interact and contribute to the well-being of young adults in their relationships. Through rigorous analysis and interpretation of data, we aim to elucidate pathways and patterns that shed light on the interplay between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction, thereby informing the development of evidence-based interventions and support programs tailored to young adults' specific needs.

Ultimately, this research endeavors to address a critical gap in knowledge by comprehensively examining the complex interplay between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction among young adults. By doing so, this study aims to pave the way for interventions and support initiatives that foster positive outcomes and promote the well-being and development of young adults in their intimate relationships.

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## 2. Method

### 2.1. Statement of the problem

The current study examines the relationship between Body image, Assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction among young adults. Understanding these interrelationships can offer valuable insights into personal development and well-being, potentially informing interventions to enhance relationship quality in this population.

#### *Objective*

The present study aims to explore the intricate relationship between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction among young adults. Given the growing influence of societal standards on self-perception and interpersonal interactions, understanding these connections is essential for fostering well-being in this demographic. Specifically, this study seeks to

- Examine the association between body image perceptions and assertiveness levels, recognising the role of self-perception in shaping interpersonal confidence.
- Investigate how assertiveness influences relationship satisfaction, considering its role in effective communication and emotional intimacy.
- Explore whether body image perceptions directly impact relationship satisfaction or if assertiveness mediates this relationship.
- Identify demographic and contextual factors that may moderate these associations, offering a nuanced understanding of individual differences.
- Provide empirical insights that can inform psychological interventions aimed at improving self-concept, interpersonal effectiveness, and overall relationship satisfaction among young adults.

### 2.2. Hypothesis

- **H1:** Body image perceptions will be significantly and negatively correlated with assertiveness levels among young adults, such that individuals with lower body satisfaction will demonstrate reduced assertiveness.
- **H2:** Higher assertiveness levels will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction, indicating that individuals who express themselves more confidently will report greater satisfaction in their relationships.
- **H3:** Body image perceptions will have a significant relationship with relationship satisfaction, among young adults.

### 2.3. Measures

The study employed a comprehensive battery of well-established measures to assess various dimensions pertinent to young adults' relationships, body image perceptions, and assertiveness. Relationship satisfaction was evaluated using the

#### *2.3.1. Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale*

A widely validated tool renowned for its robustness across diverse relationship types. Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale (BRSS) - developed by David D. Burns (1983) is a 7-item self-report inventory. Total scores range from 0 (lack of

intimacy, extreme conflict) to 42 with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. The scale has a high internal consistency (coefficient alpha = .94) and has a strong correlation with other tools of relationship satisfaction, including the Locke-Wallace MAT ( $r=.80$ ), Dyadic Adjustment Scale ( $r = -.89$ ), and Norton's Quality of Marriage Index ( $r = .91$ ) [34].

### 2.3.2. Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (BIAQ)

Body image perceptions were assessed through the Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (BIAQ), a reliable instrument capturing nuanced aspects of body image experience, particularly focusing on avoidance behaviors related to body image concerns. The BIAQ is a 19-item instrument designed to measure behavioral tendencies often accompanying body-image disturbance. In particular, the questionnaire deals with avoidance of situations that provoke concern about physical appearance, such as avoidance of physical intimacy, social outings, and tight-fitting clothes. Since these avoidance behaviors are common in persons with body dissatisfaction and since there are no measures of this component of the problem, the authors interviewed 40 randomly selected female residents of a university dormitory and categorized commonly reported complaints of behavioral changes associated with negative body image into the items of this questionnaire. The measure is viewed as useful for targeting changes in avoidance of these situations as a result of treatment. The BIAQ has excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .89, and is very stable with a two-week, test-retest reliability coefficient of .87. The BIAQ has fair to good concurrent validity, with a low but significant correlation of .22 with body size estimation, a correlation of .78 with the Body Shape Questionnaire, and correlations of .68 and .63 with the Shape Concern and Weight Concern scales respectively. The BIAQ has good known-groups validity, significantly distinguishing between clinical (bulimia nervosa) and nonclinical populations. Finally, the BIAQ is sensitive to changes in clients with body-image disturbance.

### 2.4. Rathaus assertiveness schedule

Assertiveness, a key interpersonal skill, was measured using the 30-item schedule for measuring assertiveness called the Rathaus assertiveness schedule. The schedule is shown to have moderate to high test-retest reliability ( $r=.78$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and split-half reliability ( $r = .77$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Validity in terms of the impressions respondents make on other people ( $.33 \leq r \leq .62$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and in terms of their indications of how they would behave in specific situations in which assertive, outgoing behavior can be used with profit ( $r=.70$ ;  $p < .01$ ) is satisfactory. Item analysis shows that 27 of the 30 items correlate significantly with the total scale score and 19 of 30 correlate with external criteria. These instruments were administered following standardized procedures, with participants responding to Likert scales. The sequential administration of measures was counterbalanced to mitigate potential order effects. Statistical analyses, including correlation (Pearson correlation coefficients), mediation, and moderation analyses, were conducted to elucidate the relationships among the variables. Significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Overall, the rigorous methodology employed in this study facilitated a comprehensive examination of the interplay between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction among young adults, yielding insights crucial for theoretical understanding and practical interventions to promote well-being in this demographic.

### 2.5. Participants

The participants in this research study consisted of 235 young adults, comprising 126 females and 109 males. They were recruited from a diverse pool of young adults residing in various regions. The sampling technique utilized was purposive sampling. Recruitment efforts were conducted through multiple channels, including community outreach, social media platforms, and university networks, to ensure a representative sample. To be eligible for participation, individuals had to meet specific criteria: (a) they had to be between the ages of 18 and 25 years, (b) they had to be fluent in English, and (c) they had to be willing to participate voluntarily. Upon meeting the eligibility criteria, participants underwent a screening process to confirm their suitability for inclusion in the study. This screening process involved assessing factors such as marital status, prior participation in similar research studies, and any existing medical or psychological conditions that could potentially impact their ability to participate effectively. The demographic characteristics of the participants were reflective of a diverse young adult population. These characteristics included variations in educational backgrounds, employment status, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of ethnicity, cultural background, and geographical location. The recruitment and selection process adhered to ethical guidelines, with participants provided with informed consent before their participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of participant data were strictly maintained throughout the study, following established research ethics standards. Overall, the participants in this study represented a varied and dynamic sample of young adults, contributing valuable insights to the research objectives.

## 2.6. Procedure

The study followed a streamlined procedure to systematically collect data from young adults aged 18 to 25. Recruitment efforts targeted diverse populations through online platforms and direct approaches. Participants provided informed consent after receiving detailed information about the study's objectives and procedures. Data collection involved administering standardized questionnaires to assess variables such as body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction. Strict measures were implemented to ensure participant privacy and confidentiality. Data analysis utilized statistical software of statistical package of social sciences for thorough examination, including correlational analyses. Findings were interpreted within the context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks. The results were disseminated through academic channels and relevant platforms to reach stakeholders such as researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

## 2.7. Research design

Quantitative research design with correlation analysis was used in the study.

## 2.8. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were computed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample. Inferential statistical analyses, including correlation analyses, and moderation analyses, were conducted to examine the associations among body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction. Correlation analyses assessed the strength and direction of relationships between pairs of variables, providing insights into their associations, while moderation analyses investigated the moderating effects of demographic variables (e.g., gender, age,) on the associations among the study variables using statistical package for social sciences. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ , and appropriate statistical techniques were employed to rigorously analyze the data and test the study hypotheses. The findings of the data analysis were interpreted within the context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks, providing insights into the interplay between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction among young adults.

## 3. Results

**Table 1** Pearson correlation coefficients between three variables: Body Image (BI\_SUM), Assertiveness (A\_SUM), and Relationship Satisfaction (R\_SUM)

		1	2	3
Body Image _SUM	Pearson Correlation	-	-0.131*	-0.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.044	0.186
Assertiveness _SUM	Pearson Correlation	-0.131*	-	0.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.044	-	0.929
Relationship satisfaction _SUM	Pearson Correlation	-0.086	0.006	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.186	0.929	-

Note. \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

As show above in Table 1, the Pearson correlation coefficients between three variables: Body Image (BI\_SUM), Assertiveness (A\_SUM), and Relationship Satisfaction (R\_SUM). A weak but significant negative correlation was found between the Body Image and the Assertiveness ( $p = .044$ ,  $r = -0.131$ ) dimensions, suggesting that the individuals with lower body satisfaction tend to present lower assertiveness, probably due to self-image problems. There were no significant associations found for Body Image and Relationship Satisfaction ( $r = -0.086$ ,  $p = 0.186$ ) or Assertiveness and Relationship Satisfaction ( $r = 0.006$ ,  $p = 0.929$ ) demonstrating that these variables have no direct effect on relationship satisfaction. This, in turn, suggests that these findings are not simply a comparison of measures of interpersonal assertiveness or closeness; instead, they highlight the importance of nuanced interpersonal satisfaction that is likely tied to deeper underlying psychological processes (e.g., self-esteem, emotional intelligence) and/or broader relational patterns (e.g., the ways that partners communicate).

**Table 2** T-Test Analysis of Body Image Perceptions between Female and Male Young Adults

Independent Samples Test			Body Image	
			Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	<i>F</i>		0.092	
	<i>Sig.</i>		0.762	
t-test for Equality of Means	<i>t</i>		1.111	1.111
	<i>df</i>		233	228.529
	Significance (2-Sided)		0.268	0.268
	Mean Difference		1.622	1.622
	Std. Error Difference		1.46	1.459
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-1.254	-1.253
		Upper	4.498	4.497

As shown in Table 2 above, the t-test analysis comparing body image perceptions between male young adults and female young adults ( $t(233) = 1.111, p = 0.268$ ), there is no statistical difference between the two groups. Females ( $M = 33.07, SD = 11.190$ ) had higher average scores than males ( $M = 31.45, SD = 11.125$ ), but the mean difference of 1.622 is well within the 95% confidence interval (-1.254 to 4.498), indicating that the difference is not significant. Indeed, these results contrast with the pervasive idea found in popular culture that body image concerns are limited to one gender as research has suggested that males and females are subject to societal pressures regarding appearance [33]. This finding highlights the need for creating gender-responsive interventions to foster positive body image and self-acceptance. By addressing these issues across genders, mental health professionals can foster a more supportive environment that enhances overall well-being.

**Table 3** T-Test Analysis of Assertiveness Perceptions between Female and Male Young Adults

Independent Samples Test			Assertiveness	
			Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	<i>F</i>		9.168	
	<i>Sig.</i>		0.003	
t-test for Equality of Means	<i>t</i>		-0.238	-0.234
	<i>df</i>		233	206.886
	Significance (2-Sided)		0.812	0.815
	Mean Difference		-0.408	-0.408
	Std. Error Difference		1.717	1.744
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-3.791	-3.846
		Upper	2.975	3.03

As shown in Table 3 above, the results of t-test comparison analyses showed that there were no significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups in terms of their perceptions of assertiveness (male mean = 56.08, SD = 14.574; female mean = 55.67, SD = 11.734;  $p > 0.05$ ) between males and females ( $t(233) = -0.238$ ,  $p = 0.815$ ). With a mean difference of -0.408, the 95% confidence interval (-3.791 to 2.975) suggests any observed difference can be attributable predominantly to random variation, rather than gender-based differences. This belies the stereotype to some degree; traditionally, it has been assumed that assertiveness related more strongly to males, line with the research that shows that trait assertiveness is not a male characteristic [11,24].

It can be noted that training programs which are based on the belief that assertiveness levels differ between genders may be contributing to the gender biases as such programs would train individuals on how to communicate and stand for themselves depending on their gender. For instance, recognizing and challenging societal misconceptions and perceptions of assertiveness can help in fostering more equal professional and social cultures in which both men and women are comfortable with expressing themselves.

**Table 4** T-Test Analysis for Relationship Satisfaction between Female and Male Young Adults

Independent Samples Test			Relationship Satisfaction	
			Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	<i>F</i>	0.033	
		<i>Sig.</i>	0.855	
	t-test for Equality of Means	<i>t</i>	-0.407	-0.408
		<i>df</i>	233	229.67
		Significance (2-Sided)	0.684	0.684
		Mean Difference	-0.508	-0.508
		Std. Error Difference	1.25	1.247
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-2.97
			Upper	1.953
				1.949

The t-test analysis of relationship satisfaction between the two groups (Group 1:  $N = 126$ ,  $M = 27.73$ ,  $SD = 9.663$ ; Group 0:  $N = 109$ ,  $M = 28.24$ ,  $SD = 9.422$ ) shows that there is no statistical significance difference ( $t(233) = -0.407$ ,  $p = 0.684$ ) with a mean difference of -0.508 to within 95% confidence interval (-2.970, 1.953). Although the means of the two groups differ slightly, the differences are not significant enough to claim that one group is more satisfied in relationships than the other. This is in concordance with other research that have been conducted to establish factors that affect relationship satisfaction not only include gender but also factors such as communication, conflict resolution and personality [23]. These findings further underscore the nature of relationship satisfaction as complex and require consideration of interpersonal and contextual factors rather than gender only. It is important to recognize that relationship satisfaction is a function of various variables to improve relationship counselling and interventions that are not based on gender stereotypes.

#### 4. Discussion

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between assertiveness and body image, but there is no significant relationship between assertiveness and relationship satisfaction, and body image and relationship satisfaction. A possible reason for the negative correlation between assertiveness and body image could be that people with low body image satisfaction may lack self-confidence and assertiveness in social settings. This finding is in line with other research, for example, Tiggemann and Rothblum (1988) who established that body dissatisfaction was related to low assertiveness among women [42]. In research conducted by Bardone-Cone et al. (2007), it was established that people with negative body image had low levels of assertiveness [5]. Therefore, it can be



concluded that body image concerns affect social behavior and interpersonal communication. However, the lack of correlations between assertiveness and relationship satisfaction as well as body image and relationship satisfaction could mean that other factors, which are not related to assertiveness and body image, are the key determinants of relationship satisfaction. When looking at the factors that suggest the absence of a significant relationship between assertiveness and relationship satisfaction among young adults, several important issues can be identified. First, it is important to note that relationships are not a simple phenomenon and have many aspects. On the one hand, assertiveness is considered as an important factor for good interpersonal communication but on the other hand, its link with relationship satisfaction may not be very strong. This is because, young adults must contend with several factors that are likely to influence relationship dynamics including emotional intelligence, communication styles, and conflict management skills. So, assertiveness alone may not be the ultimate predictor of relationship satisfaction. There are individual differences which matter quite a bit. Young adults differ greatly in personality, attachment styles and expectations for relationships, all of which also can moderate the relationship between assertiveness and satisfaction. Plus, gender norms and socialization patterns provide pressure and direction about how to approach assertiveness and relationships.

There are a few things that stand out when looking at why body image doesn't always correlate strongly with relationship satisfaction in young adults. Firstly, relationships are about a lot more than looks: Communication and shared values and so on. These things matter more than looks when it comes to relationship happiness. Note as well that collective ideas about body image are not the same everywhere, influencing how we observe our own selves within relationships. List options include social media, body/image issues, substance issues; add to that people have different tools for coping with those issues, with varying degrees of impact on your relationship. Lastly, during young adulthood, people are still figuring out who they are, which can change how they see their bodies and relationships. So, while body image is important, it's just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to relationship satisfaction for young adults.

#### 4.1. Implications

Programs aimed at educational and therapeutic purposes, concerning body image and assertiveness, may enable young adults to participate in social and intimate relationships more effectively. For example, body positivity workshops and assertiveness training could improve people's social interactions and, therefore, their positive self-concept and confidence. However, assertiveness on its own does not necessarily lead to higher relationship satisfaction. However, these skills may aid in more meaningful social interaction. Relationship counselling can be helped by the understanding that relationship satisfaction is not solely a function of assertiveness and body image factors. You can help young adults by suggesting that they look at other, more fundamental relational qualities like communication, empathy, and conflict resolution to build better relationships. Community programs and policies can assist in reducing the impact of societal pressures concerning body standards through the promotion of diverse and realistic representations of physical appearance. These initiatives can be very effective in shaping positive body image and assertiveness and, thus, have implications for interpersonal interactions and relationship dynamics. Further research could be done to explore how cultural, societal, and gender-related factors affect body image and assertiveness in different relational contexts. Longitudinal studies may offer more specific details on how these factors change with time and thus give a more accurate picture of their impact on adult relationships.

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## 5. Conclusion

Overall, this study sheds light on the complex interrelations between body image, assertiveness, and relationship satisfaction in young adults. There was a weak but statistically significant negative correlation between body image and assertiveness but no statistically significant correlations were found between assertiveness and relationship satisfaction and body image and relationship satisfaction. These results suggest that while body image may influence the way that young adults experience assertiveness in relationships, it has little impact on relationship satisfaction. Perhaps this is because how satisfied we are with our relationships settles on many factors besides assertiveness or how we see our bodies like emotional support, communication styles, and common interests. Hence, understanding body image and assertiveness as interwoven but not determinative of relationship satisfaction suggests that interventions aimed at improving young adults' well-being should consider a holistic approach to relationship dynamics and self-perception.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

### Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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